

Research Article 01

Do Satisfied Tourists Return? Analyzing Revisit Patterns of Inbound Visitors to Mihintale Heritage Site, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Heritage tourism holds a significant place in Sri Lanka's tourism sector, with the Mihintale heritage site distinguishing itself due to its dual heritage and religious significance. This research explored the determinants of inbound tourists' satisfaction at the Mihintale site and investigated the relationship between satisfaction and their revisit intentions. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from the Mihintale heritage site using a structured questionnaire, yielding 221 valid responses for subsequent analysis. PLS-SEM results indicated that the site's distinctiveness, heritage characteristics, and calibre of facilities and services were strongly associated with tourist satisfaction. However, satisfaction's efficacy as a predictor for revisit intention was found to be limited. This study also discusses the broader theoretical and managerial implications derived from these findings.

Keywords: Heritage characteristics, Heritage tourism, Revisitation, Satisfaction

Introduction

Sri Lanka boasts a diverse tapestry of religious and cultural traditions. While Buddhism is the predominant religion, significant populations also practice Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. The island's rich cultural heritage is shaped by its religious traditions, historical landmarks, ancient cities, practices of meditation and yoga, traditional music and dance, and a plethora of festivals, ceremonies, and rituals. Certain sites, showcasing a myriad of religious attractions, underscore the depth and authenticity of this rich cultural milieu. Notably, the North Central Province of Sri Lanka is a treasure trove of cultural resources, attributed to two ancient cities that served as the island's capitals for over a millennium.

Tourism can be categorized based on the purpose of the journey. One of the primary categories of tourism is historical or heritage tourism (Alzua, 1998). Silva (2000) asserts that the historic cities of Sri Lanka boast remarkable memorials and rich cultural artistry. The cultural triangle of Sri Lanka is defined by three significant locations: Kandy, Anuradhapura, and Polonnaruwa. The country is a treasure trove of historical landmarks, including eight UNESCO World Heritage sites, with Mihintale being one of them. Specifically, Mihintale stands out as a popular heritage tourism spot, attracting both

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domestic and international tourists. Many visitors to these historical and cultural sites often find their experiences invaluable, which enhances the likelihood of their return visit.

Mihintale is one of Sri Lanka's most significant sites for historical tourism. According to Gunarathne and Gunasinghe (2017), attractions such as the Cafeteria, Ambasthala Dagaba, Aradhana Gala (Rock), Kaludiya Pokuna (Pond), Naga Pokuna, Sinha Pokuna, and Katu Seya (Dagaba) draw a large number of tourists due to their archaeological significance and evidence. Every June, there is a surge in tourist arrivals because of the Poson Festival, a pivotal day for Sri Lankan Buddhists. Mihintale is believed to be the birthplace of Buddhism in the country. Travelers visit Mihintale to experience its structures, festivals, temples, architectural wonders, museums, caves, stupas, ponds, terraces, flights of steps, paths, retaining walls, and stone inscriptions.

According to Timothy (2014), cultural heritage is among the most vital and widely utilized instruments in global tourism. Heritage tourism has become one of the predominant forms of tourism in contemporary times. Many locations leverage tourism, the built environment, and other forms of patrimony for socio-economic advancement. Specifically, cultural tourism has branched out into several emerging specializations, such as historical, arts, gourmet, film, and artistic tourism (Richards, 2018)

Many researchers throughout the world are becoming more interested in heritage tourism studies (Zhang et al., 2022). However, just a few research on heritage tourism has been conducted in the Sri Lankan context. In previous investigations, the researchers found many heritage-related features that impact heritage tourists travel experiences. Some heritage tourism studies looked at characteristics such as service fairness, on-site facilities and services, heritage attractiveness, history and culture, heritage image, experience satisfaction, perceived value, site attractions, and site uniqueness. It is crucial to evaluate the different features of a heritage tourism site in answering why visitors visit heritage sites and what they expect. Various heritage sites may have distinct characteristics that attract and satisfy visitors' expectations. It is vital to determine which heritage components impact on visitor satisfaction and are likely to return. As a result, this study focuses on what makes visitors satisfied and how their satisfaction influences their desire to return Mihintale heritage site.

Literature Review

Heritage tourism, which is often included under cultural tourism, is one of the most notable and common forms of tourism (Timothy and Boyd, 2006). Heritage tourism has grown in importance in the global tourism business has shown a significant impact on how tangible and intangible heritage are presented and represented in tourism. In particular, the heritage is constantly recreated and reinterpreted to fulfil tourists' specific needs and represent contemporary socio-cultural changes. As a result, heritage and tourism have a complicated and interdependent relationship. Several scholars suggested that the motivations and expectations of visitors about the site's historical and heritage qualities are crucial in determining the scope of heritage tourism (Alvarez and Korzay, 2013; Balcar and Pearce, 1996).

Satisfaction and revisitation are well-researched concepts in tourist behavioural research. The current study takes heritage attributes, site uniqueness, site attractiveness, facilities and services, and knowledge gained as the antecedents of heritage tourism satisfaction.

The following sections will cover those variables' conceptual background and the subsequent variables of satisfaction and revisit intention.

Heritage Tourist Satisfaction

According to Domnguez-Quintero et al. (2018), consumer satisfaction has been extensively researched in marketing in general and tourism in particular. Satisfaction is a cognitive or emotional response to an aspect or specific things such as expectations, product, and customer experience. Usually, satisfaction includes a comparison of perception to a previously defined standard or expectations and what has been received (Tse and Wilton, 1988). High satisfaction rates generally lead to high behavioural intentions like loyalty, repurchase, and revisitation (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Qin and Prybutok, 2009).

According to Wong and Law (2003), tourist satisfaction is essential for successful destination marketing because it is linked to the choice of destination, consumption of products and services, and repeat visits. Moreover, tourist satisfaction is expressed by pre and post-tourism experiences. When the experience is higher than expected, they are satisfied (Turner and Reisinger, 2003). Numerous literature suggests that tourists' satisfaction during a visit to the heritage site has several important qualities. In particular, satisfaction is defined as a tourist's emotional condition after a journey to a chosen destination, in which the tourist enjoyed the visit (Um et al., 2006; Westbrook et al., 1991).

Revisit Intention to Heritage Sites

Understanding tourist revisitation is multi-faceted. The revisitation can generate considerable income for the destination. The management of many tourism and hospitality enterprises formulate and implement strategies to make their visitors visit again in a couple of months or at least years (Bodet, 2008). Revisitation or re-buying is a prime indicator of loyalty. Generally, the intention to revisit refers to a tourist's cognitive state that reflects the return plans to a particular destination for a given period (Weaver and Lawton, 2011). The revisitation is crucial for a heritage destination as it can directly influence the success of the heritage tourism site (Jang and Feng, 2007). According to Som and Badarneh (2011), the desire to return to a place boosts international tourism.

Heritage Characteristics

Heritage attributes, site attractiveness, and site uniqueness are prominent heritage characteristics used in evaluating heritage tourism sites (Huh & Uysal, 2004). According to Rif'an (2016), attraction is a different dimension since it occurs frequently or can only be sensed in specific places and periods. Tourist attractions, he says, are anything that attracts visitors to a tourist destination, whether it's art, culture, historical legacy, customs, natural resources, or entertainment. Attraction is a one-of-a-kind trait that occurs or may be experienced only in certain places and at specified times.

Destination attributes are significant in image-building and vital for an unforgettable travel experience (Kim, 2014) with a high level of influence on destination choice (Baniya et al., 2017). Heritage destinations also consist of various site-specific attributes. From a marketing point of view, the image of a heritage destination is resultant from a mix of

heritage attributes and different promotional strategies (Awaritefe, 2004). Vong and Ung (2012) and Sofield and Li (1998) have identified a range of heritage attributes for creating a satisfactory visitor experience: history, culture, architecture, traditional festivals, historical events, historical sites, and beautiful scenic heritage. A study conducted in Denmark by Andersen et al. (1997) also has identified some heritage attributes: historic buildings, museums, galleries, theatres and festivals, food, palace buildings, renowned people, castles, sports, and ancient cities.

Attractiveness, which is a function of the site attractions, also is one of the primary determinants of destination competitiveness and a vital component of the tourism industry and often has a significant impact on personal travel priorities. (Kresic, 2008; Prideaux, 2002). In the context of heritage tourism, attractiveness plays a critical role in marketing strategies for local and foreign visitors (Rogerson, 2015).

Attractions are *unique* to the destination, and therefore, *uniqueness* is another consideration a tourist destination should maintain to have a competitive edge. (Rifan, 2016). According to Bonn et al. (2007), each visitor looks for a particular set of features and characteristics in an attraction, and therefore, each site attraction must discover its emotional distinctiveness to attract a specific type of tourist.

Heritage attributes, attractiveness, and site uniqueness described above are the three primary constructs deployed in this research to examine the heritage characteristics. Apart from that, 'knowledge gained' and 'facilities and services' were included in the theoretical research model to improve the perfectness of the research study.

Knowledge Gained and Facilities and Services

Epistemic considerations also are essential in examining destination selection and visitor satisfaction (Dassanayake, 2017; Dassanayake and Zahra, 2013). Scholars have posited that the educational experience is also vital for cultural tourism, including heritage tourism (Poria et al., 2004). As per Bonn et al. (2007), educational and informative components are remarkable in stimulating the motivations and increasing visitor satisfaction in heritage tourist sites. Wang et al. (2010) argued that the heritage tourist sites should invest their income in improving the educational opportunities for the visitors, thereby increasing the destination competitiveness. Therefore, the 'knowledge gained' also is an essential factor in determining visitor satisfaction at heritage sites.

According to Kozak and Rimmington (1998), the tourist destination components can be identified in five categories: attractions, facilities and services, infrastructure, hospitality, and cost. Facilities and services at the tourist destination are compulsory irrespective of the nature of the site, and the construction of facilities is essential (Yang et al., 2010). Upgrading of infrastructure and service facilities are critical to popularizing any tourist destination. In particular, focusing on security factors and easy accessibility, maintaining site cleanliness and a pleasant atmosphere, facilitating basic human needs are notable in this regard (Ung and Vong, 2010).

Development of Hypotheses

As described above, the current research deals with five independent variables, one mediating variable, and one dependent variable. The causalities among the variables are determined with the directions and findings of past similar studies for testing.

Heritage attributes, attractiveness, and site uniqueness are highly connected to the satisfaction at any form of a tourist destination. As Truong and King (2009) postulated, the characteristics of a tourist site encompass various factors, including natural beauty, local history and culture, safety, and hospitality. Rajesh and Madhuri (2013) emphasized the links between destination image, attributes, satisfaction, and loyalty in assessing visitor satisfaction at a tourist site and highlighted the attributes such as travel environment, natural attraction, historical and heritage characteristics, accessibility and relaxation. Pizam et al. (1978) and Kim (2014) argued that each destination attribute should be linked with satisfaction to examine the causalities as one particular attribute alone cannot fully explain visitor satisfaction. According to a study conducted by Huh and Uysal (2004), the destination attributes show a strong relationship between visitor satisfaction and cultural heritage experience. The attractiveness is also independent but related to the attributes. Concerning a heritage tourist site, how the visitor perceives the overall beauty of the place is also crucial in determining satisfaction (Okello and Yerian, 2009). Som et al. (2012) also posited the attractiveness of a travel destination. Uniqueness also pulls visitors to a destination and influences traveller satisfaction. Jun (2016) proposed and confirmed that statistically significant relationships are exit destination uniqueness and overall visitor satisfaction. Vajcnerova et al. (2013) also found that the higher the uniqueness, higher the satisfaction.

Given the above discussion, the first three hypotheses of the study are developed as follows.

H₁: Heritage attributes has a positive impact on satisfaction

H₂: Site attractiveness has a positive impact on satisfaction

H₃: Site uniqueness has a positive impact on satisfaction

Apart from heritage attributes, site attractiveness, and site uniqueness, the facilities and services available at the destination and knowledge gained through the visit also are crucial in determining visitor satisfaction at a heritage destination. Vong and Young (2012) found that the facilities and services available at heritage sites are associated with the site experience and satisfaction. Boukas (2007) also has postulated the importance of facilities and services in rendering a superior service at a heritage tourist site. Educational intent is also a part of the visitor experience, and hence, It is a factor to determine the satisfaction of the tour. Laws (1998) also tested the causalities between facilities and services at the destination and traveller satisfaction and found that a relationship exists. Finally, as the body of behavioural studies suggested, visitor satisfaction leads to the revisit intention. Damanik and Yusuf (2022) confirmed the satisfaction-revisit intention relationship through their study conducted in Borobudur Temple, Indonesia. Prayag et al. (2017) also have confirmed the link between satisfaction and revisitation concerning heritage tourism.

Consequently, the rest of the three hypotheses of the study are developed as follows.

- H₄: Facilities and services has a positive impact on satisfaction
H₅: Knowledge gained has a positive impact on satisfaction
H₆: Satisfaction has a positive impact on revisit intention

Research Methodology

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 02 parts primarily. The first part collected the demographic information, whereas the second part collected data on main research variables. Reflective indicators were applied in measuring the research variables on a five-point Likert scale (1= "strongly disagree" and 5= "strongly agree"). Nineteen questionnaire items were used to measure the independent variables (four items each for site attractiveness and facilities and services; three items each for heritage attributes and knowledge gained, and five items for site uniqueness) derived from previous research (Ung & Vong, 2010; Lagamuwa, 2015; Moon & Han, 2018; Poria et al., 2003). However, one item from site attractiveness (SA01) and knowledge gained (GK01) were excluded from the analysis based on insufficient factor loadings. Finally, six and three indicators were used to measure the satisfaction and revisit intention. The questionnaire was developed in English as the inbound visitors were targeted.

University academics with expertise in tourism research evaluated the questionnaire. As a result, necessary changes were made. The questionnaire did not include any personal identifying questions to maintain the anonymity of the respondent. Furthermore, as previously stated, all of the questionnaire items were developed using previous well-tested instruments and the questionnaire length was limited to twenty-eight items for research constructs to avoid possible common methods bias (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The study examined the heritage values and the satisfaction of foreign visitors visiting the Mihintale heritage site. The inbound visitors to the site were considered the population, and the data collection was carried out in December 2022. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, and the respondent's consent was obtained verbally before presenting the questionnaire. The tourists were approached when they were returning from the site after their visit applying a systematic random sampling technique in which each of the three visitors passing the exit point. Finally, a total of 221 usable and completed questionnaires were used in the analysis. The sample size of 220 was deemed sufficient for this study given the niche population we were targeting and the focused nature of our research objectives.

Data Analysis

Sample Characteristics

The demographics of the sample are shown in Table 1. Males made up 48.4% of the sample, while females made up 51.6%. The majority of the participants are married (52%), followed by unmarried respondents (45.2%). Out of 221 respondents, 173 represent the European region accounting for 78.3% of the total sample. Interestingly, the travel companion statistics have been fairly distributed among the given categories, highlighting the spouse and girlfriend/boyfriend as the respondents' most reported travel partners.

Table 1: Respondents Demographics

Description	Count	%	Description	Count	%
<u>Gender</u>			<u>Travel Companion</u>		
Male	107	48.4	Alone	31	14.0
Female	114	51.6	Group	41	18.6
<u>Marital Status</u>			Family	31	14.0
Single	100	45.2	Girlfriend/Boyfriend	43	19.5
Married	115	52.0	Spouse	52	23.5
Divorced	4	01.8	Friends	23	10.4
Widowed	2	00.9	<u>Age</u>		
<u>Region</u>			19 years and below	5	02.3
Asia	19	08.6	20-29	64	29.0
Europe	173	78.3	30-39	50	22.6
Australia	21	09.5	40-49	22	10.0
Africa	8	03.6	50-59	29	13.1
<u>Education</u>			60 and Above	51	23.1
Primary	2	00.9			
Secondary	31	14.0			
College Level	54	24.4			
University	134	60.6			
Graduate					

The majority of the respondents represent the age group of 20-29 (29%) and 30-39 (22%), highlighting higher youth representation in the sample. Overall, the sample consists of educated people where 60% of them have at least a bachelor's degree.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables and their indicators. In terms of the overall mean scores of the variables, site attractiveness (4.55) has the highest mean value, followed by satisfaction (4.47) on a five-point Likert scale. However, the mean score of revisit intention has reported the lowest mean score (3.62) among the variables, indicating the respondents are less likely to revisit the site.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Item's Label	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Heritage Attributes (Overall Mean 4.19)	HA01	High archaeological value is evident	3.937	0.795	-0.598	0.744
	HA02	Historical buildings and ruins improve the value of the site	4.321	0.557	-0.373	1.260
	HA03	The site has a collection of ancient properties	4.308	0.622	-0.553	0.562
Site Attractiveness (Overall Mean 4.55)	SA02	I like the environment of this place	4.615	0.515	-0.778	-0.727
	SA03	The surrounding atmosphere is attractive	4.262	0.771	-0.850	0.291
	SA04	I can spend a long time at this site	4.783	0.445	-1.839	2.492
Facilities and services (Overall Mean 3.82)	FS01	This place is accessible easily	3.851	0.920	-0.902	1.051
	FS02	I feel an excellent safety at this site.	4.276	0.733	-0.903	0.800
	FS03	Information is freely available.	3.593	0.923	-0.048	-0.528
	FS04	Food and accommodation surrounding the site are satisfactory	3.552	0.855	-0.274	-0.344
Site Uniqueness (Overall Mean 4.11)	SU01	This site is different from other heritage destinations.	4.027	0.653	-0.422	0.665
	SU02	This site is unique in comparison to other heritage destinations.	4.081	0.794	-0.863	1.307
	SU03	This site stands out from other heritage sites.	4.222	0.618	-0.182	-0.551
	SU04	This site is distinct from other heritage sites.	4.136	0.674	-0.348	-0.109
	SU05	This site has a variety of attractions.	4.090	0.640	-0.501	1.014
Knowledge Gained (Overall Mean 4.03)	GK02	I can improve my knowledge about the history of this place.	4.059	0.661	-0.444	0.611
	GK03	I can improve my knowledge about the culture and heritage of this site	4.005	0.823	-0.749	0.326
Satisfaction (Overall Mean 4.47)	ST01	I am satisfied with this visit to Mihintale.	4.489	0.553	-0.770	1.485
	ST02	I feel comfortable at this site	4.484	0.561	-0.483	-0.797
	ST03	It is an excellent place to spend my time.	4.588	0.511	-0.566	-1.201
	ST04	I would rate the place one of the best.	4.294	0.694	-0.633	-0.086
	ST05	This trip fulfilled my needs.	4.407	0.593	-0.427	-0.676
	ST06	I enjoyed this trip.	4.570	0.565	-0.890	-0.215
Revisit Intention (Overall Mean 3.62)	RI01	I intend to revisit this destination in the future	3.357	0.965	-0.371	-0.214
	RI02	I think this is an excellent place to visit again and again.	3.706	0.958	-0.320	-0.809
	RI03	If I get a chance, I will revisit this place shortly	3.801	0.937	-0.528	-0.522

According to mean scores and the respective standard deviation values of the individual indicators of the variables, it can be concluded that most of the questionnaire items have a mean value at least higher than 4.0, indicating a high level of the respondents to the given statements. However, the respondent's intention to revisit the Mihintale in the future has the lowest mean value among all the indicators. Finally, the manifest variables' skewness and kurtosis values are generally found between +1 and -1, demonstrating that the data set is approximately normally distributed.

PLS-SEM Analysis

PLS-SEM (partial least square structural equation modelling) is a variance-based statistical modelling approach that may be used instead of co-variance-based structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2017). In terms of sample size and data dispersion, PLS-SEM is unique and tolerating (Hair et al., 2017). By evaluating the skewness and kurtosis statistics (Table 2), the normality of the data set was determined, with the majority of the items being inconsistent for a normal distribution, justifying the use of PLS-SEM in the analysis.

Two alternative techniques were used to verify the sample size. First, Hair et al. (2017) proposed the rule of “10 times the highest number of structural pathways directed at a specific latent construct in the structural model. Five arrows point to the satisfaction variable, implying that a sample size of 50 (5*10) would be adequate to run the model. Second, the PLS-SEM sample size suggestion table was used (Hair et al., 2017, p. 26). According to the table, because the current study has five routes leading to revisit intention, a sample size of 122 is necessary, which is less than this study's sample size (221), given the parameters of statistical power of 80%, a significance level of 5%, and a minimum R² value of 0.10.

Measurement Model Evaluation

SmartPLS version 3.3.3 was used to analyze data. Internal consistency, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are four criteria for evaluating reflective measurement models (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 3: Measurement Model Evaluation Criteria

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Revisit Intention	0.855	0.912	0.776
Satisfaction	0.823	0.872	0.532
Site Uniqueness	0.789	0.854	0.542
Knowledge Gained	0.770	0.897	0.813
Facilities and Services	0.690	0.812	0.521
Heritage Attributes	0.657	0.811	0.592
Site Attractiveness	0.675	0.735	0.494

Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability values are both greater than (or very close to) 0.7 (Table 3), indicating that the internal consistency is confirmed (Hair et al., 2017). It was noticed that some of the indicators had got loadings less than the general threshold of 0.7 (Table 4). However, those indicators were used in the model, as the

removal did not significantly increase the AVE values of the respective variable (Hair et al., 2017). The convergent validity of the construct measures was also established since all (with one is very close to 0.5) the AVE values are greater than 0.5 (Table 3).

Table 4: Indicator Loadings and Cross-loadings

Indicator	Facilities and Services	Heritage Attributes	Knowledge Gained	Revisit Intention	Satisfaction	Site Attractiveness	Site Uniqueness
FS01	0.693	0.289	0.276	0.072	0.352	0.169	0.316
FS02	0.806	0.328	0.234	0.033	0.353	0.221	0.218
FS03	0.655	0.323	0.076	0.112	0.357	0.256	0.260
FS04	0.724	0.503	0.130	0.203	0.386	0.284	0.358
HA01	0.404	0.680	0.078	0.273	0.288	0.176	0.232
HA02	0.499	0.894	0.156	0.430	0.525	0.216	0.404
HA03	0.244	0.717	-0.050	0.113	0.354	0.109	0.192
GK02	0.184	0.073	0.900	0.292	0.193	0.068	0.378
GK03	0.261	0.098	0.903	0.320	0.196	-0.031	0.360
RI01	0.036	0.337	0.236	0.832	0.263	0.077	0.436
RI02	0.116	0.341	0.374	0.909	0.277	0.101	0.451
RI03	0.239	0.312	0.283	0.901	0.270	0.144	0.375
ST01	0.361	0.432	0.248	0.246	0.777	0.144	0.350
ST02	0.377	0.436	0.084	0.149	0.741	0.276	0.335
ST03	0.349	0.350	0.225	0.231	0.771	0.164	0.344
ST04	0.244	0.249	0.114	0.232	0.660	0.299	0.313
ST05	0.319	0.377	0.116	0.239	0.680	0.335	0.311
ST06	0.514	0.430	0.150	0.245	0.738	0.195	0.347
SA02	0.258	0.138	0.033	-0.009	0.152	0.605	0.192
SA03	0.202	0.239	-0.052	0.119	0.231	0.673	0.198
SA04	0.237	0.092	0.062	0.112	0.261	0.795	0.318
SU01	0.223	0.210	0.271	0.286	0.307	0.237	0.733
SU02	0.214	0.362	0.384	0.426	0.221	0.090	0.613
SU03	0.288	0.360	0.187	0.387	0.358	0.331	0.791
SU04	0.300	0.202	0.250	0.332	0.351	0.239	0.789
SU05	0.412	0.288	0.436	0.359	0.405	0.318	0.740

To assess discriminant validity, researchers used the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and item cross-loadings. The HTMT ratio for all variable relationships was less than 0.8 (Table 5), and the HTMT confidence intervals obtained during the bootstrapping technique did not include 0.1, demonstrating the discriminant validity of the constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The measurement items' cross-loadings into the research constructs were also examined, and it was discovered that the outer loadings on each construct are larger than all of its cross-loadings on the other constructs, implying that the constructs are discriminantly valid (Table 4).

Table 5: HTMT Criterion

	Facilities and Services	Heritage Attributes	Knowledge Gained	Revisit Intention	Satisfaction	Site Attractiveness
Heritage Attributes	0.730					
Knowledge Gained	0.341	0.172				
Revisit Intention	0.219	0.472	0.417			
Satisfaction	0.655	0.679	0.269	0.366		
Site Attractiveness	0.578	0.395	0.142	0.217	0.500	
Site Uniqueness	0.527	0.511	0.533	0.593	0.553	0.563

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was assessed for the proposed model's explanatory power and predictive relevance (Figure 1).

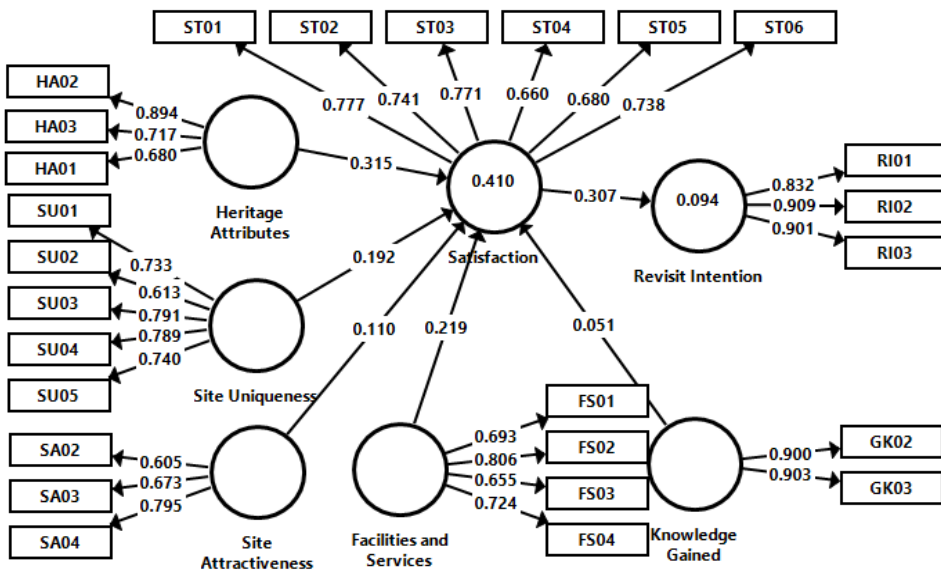


Figure 1: The Structural Model
 Source: Smart PLS Output, 2023

First, the VIF values were assessed for the threshold of less than 5 to test the collinearity issues of the structural model and found to be no potential issues of collinearity (Table 6). Second, the significance of path coefficients was evaluated with 5000 samples bootstrapping, and four path coefficients were identified as significant ($T > 1.96$) (Table 6). Third, the satisfaction (0.410) and revisit intention (0.094) R^2 values were evaluated and found moderate and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2017). Fourth, f^2 and q^2 effect

sizes were calculated to determine the predictive power and relevancy of each of the exogenous constructs on respective endogenous constructs separately. Table 6 shows the individual f^2 and q^2 values, indicating that heritage attributes, facilities and services, and site uniqueness have statistically significant predictive power and relevance on satisfaction (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 6: Structural Model Evaluation Parameters

Endogenous Constructs with Variable Relationships (Hypotheses)	VIF	Path Coefficient	T Statistic	P values	f^2 Effect Size	q^2 Effect Size	Hypotheses
Satisfaction ($R^2=0.410$; $Q^2=0.207$)							
(H ₁) Heritage Attributes -> Satisfaction	1.434	0.315	4.685	0.00	0.11	0.04	Accepted
(H ₂) Site Attractiveness -> Satisfaction	1.228	0.110	1.667	0	5	4	Rejected
(H ₃) Site Uniqueness -> Satisfaction	1.577	0.192	2.939	0.09	0.01	0.00	Accepted
(H ₄) Facilities and Services -> Satisfaction	1.545	0.219	3.312	6	5	5	Rejected
(H ₅) Knowledge Gained -> Satisfaction	1.268	0.051	0.957	0.00	0.03	0.01	Rejected
				3	9	4	
				0.00	0.05	0.01	
				1	4	9	
				0.33	0.00	0.00	
				9	3	0	
Revisit Intention ($R^2=0.094$; $Q^2=0.068$)							
(H ₆)Satisfaction -> Revisit Intention	1.000	0.307	5.166	0.00	N/A	N/A	
				0			

Results and Discussion

The discussion section is mainly in two parts; assessing descriptive statistics of research constructs and interpreting the outcomes of PLS-SEM analysis. The theoretical framework comprises with seven constructs, including one mediating and one dependent variable.

Each heritage site has various attributes to offer (Poria et al., 2001), and the attributes behave as the antecedent of satisfaction (Pei and veerakumaran, 2007). According to Poria et al. (2003), heritage-related characteristics are central in assessing the heritage value at any destination, and both the host and the guest should be well-aware of that. According to the current research results, the visitors have agreed that the Mihintale heritage site is rich with heritage attributes (Overall mean 4.19). In particular, the respondents have highly admired the historical buildings and ruins (mean 4.321) and ancient properties (Mean 4.308), followed by the archaeological values (Mean 3.937). Thus, it is evident that the visitors are eager in heritage-related attributes confirming that the bond between the tourist and the heritage attributes is strong.

The attractiveness is the key to any tourist destination, including heritage sites (Canale et al., 2019). The current research has recorded an overall mean of 4.55 on a five-point Likert scale for the attractiveness of the Mihintale heritage site, proving that the guests are pleased about the surrounding beauty and peaceful environment. In addition to the glamour, the uniqueness of a heritage destination differentiates itself from other heritage sites offering a site-specific visitor experience. According to the results, Mihintale is a

unique destination to the most extent (Overall mean 4.11) and, therefore, has a competitive advantage over other heritage sites.

The facilities and services that ensure comfort at the destination also are essential factors in assessing the goodness of a travel destination (Ballantyne et al., 2014). However, compared to other independent variables, the facilities and services at the Mihintale heritage site seem quite substandard (Overall Mean 3.82). Food and accommodation (Mean 3.552) and availability of required information (Mean 3.593) are found to be somewhat inadequate at the site, whereas those are considered as the primary requirement (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Bhuiyan & Darda, 2019). However, travellers are pleased with the accessibility (Mean 3.851), and safety (Mean 4.276) provided at Mihintale, which are also highly concerned factors. In addition, curiosity also is one of the prominent drivers to make a trip (Dassanayake, 2017; Dassanayake et al., 2015; Rajakaruna and Dassanayake, 2020), and it is even more applicable in heritage tourism as the heritage tourist eagerly expects to learn something new at the destination (Masoud et al., 2019). Overall, the visitors at Mihintale are pretty happy about what they have learnt (Overall Mean 4.03).

Satisfaction and revisit intention are highly correlated concepts in tourism literature (Chin et al., 2018). As the statistics demonstrate, visitors at the Mihintale heritage site are pretty happy (Overall Mean 4.47) compared to the revisit intention (Overall Mean 3.62). The possible reason could be that foreign visitors are generally reluctant to repeatedly visit the same (overseas) site due to various factors such as time, cost, proximity, and availability of other alternative visits. An inter-item comparison of the revisit intention variable also proves the idea that even though the foreign visitors perceive that the place is worth revisiting ('Excellent place to visit again' Mean 3.706; 'I will revisit if get a chance' Mean 3.801), no plan to come back shortly (Mean 3.357).

The PLS-SEM analysis is helpful to determine the predictive power and relevance of independent variables on the dependent variables. The satisfaction of a heritage tourist is a function of many factors. The current research examined the relevance and power of heritage attributes, uniqueness, attractiveness, facilities, and knowledge enhancement in determining tourist satisfaction at the Mihintale heritage site.

Heritage attributes are dominant among the factors in predicting satisfaction ($\beta=0.315$, $p=0.000$, $f^2=0.115$, $q^2=0.044$), thereby confirming the importance of focusing on the core attributes of the respective niche in its marketing strategy. Facilities and services ($\beta=0.219$, $p=0.001$, $f^2=0.054$, $q^2=0.019$) and site uniqueness ($\beta=0.192$, $p=0.003$, $f^2=0.039$, $q^2=0.014$) also demonstrate a substantial ability to determine satisfaction. However, knowledge gained and site attractiveness have no influences on satisfaction, contrary to findings of past studies. Finally, satisfaction has shown somewhat strong predictive power and relevance on revisitation, supporting a commonly accepted theory on consumer behaviour and tourist behaviour in the literature (Seetanah et al., 2020).

Conclusions and Recommendation

Heritage tourism has been a significant travel segment for a long time, and tour packages or private travel itineraries generally include at least one heritage tourism component. Many factors can influence visitor satisfaction specific to the particular travel segment.

The satisfaction at a heritage tourism site can also result from various segment-specific factors. However, among the heritage sites also, there can be destination-specific factors because of the high level of diversity among the heritage tourism sites. Mihintale heritage site, located in an ancient kingdom in Sri Lanka, is significant in both religious and historical values with plenty of tourist attractions and places. As the current research discovered, Mihintale provides what the visitor expects from a heritage site of such kind.

Regarding the theoretical implications, the relationships and casualties among the site-related factors, satisfaction, and revitalization supported previous research studies (Baniya et al., 2017). Notably, the PLS-SEM model could establish the influences of heritage attributes, attractiveness, uniqueness, facilities, and knowledge gained in explaining visitor satisfaction. Heritage attributes, which are critical factors of any heritage site, were the prominent factors to predict satisfaction proposing that the segment-specific characters are always vital in any tourism segment. Moreover, as the results suggest, to be different from other similar destinations is indispensable to gain customer credit; the more uniqueness, the more satisfaction (Vong & Ung, 2012). Thus, the notion of being different can earn a competitive advantage is confirmed (Chacko, 1996). In addition to that, the facilities and services are also necessary for satisfying the heritage visitor, thereby ensuring the visitors look to fulfil their on-travel requirements at the sites they visit (Jusoh et al., 2013; Ung & Vong, 2010). Finally, This study also proves the well-tested relationship between satisfaction and revisitation, confirming the similar findings of previous studies (Prayag et al., 2017)

This study has a few managerial implications applicable to Mihintale site operators and other heritage destinations. First, the conservation and promotion of heritage attributes are recommended for having a competitive edge. The destinations should identify and improve their heritage values and characteristics that differentiate them from other competitive destinations. Second, the heritage site is to be equipped with all the facilities and infrastructure that ensure the traveler's comfort.

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